

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

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DHA-02 ORM-02 AID-05 TRSE-00 /093 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3101

INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 222

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

CIA WASHDC

COMSIXTHFLT

COMPHIBRON SIX

COM THREE FOUR MAU

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0739

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION FEBRUARY 17-18

REF: BEIRUT 0709 (DTG 161552Z FEB 77)

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1. SUMMARY. SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE, FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER GUIRINGAUD, AND SOVIET DIPLOMAT MIKHAIL SYTENKO HAVE ARRIVED IN LEB. THE SITUATION AROUND REFUGEE CAMPS IN WEST BIERUT REMAINS RELATIVELY CALM, BUT THERE HAS BEEN FIGHTING IN TWO SOUTHERN TOWNS. PALESTINIANS AND COMMUNISTS APPARENTLY CONTROL TYRE. THE QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE HAS HELD AN EMERGENCY SESSION. PRES SARKIS HAS REPORTEDLY REACHED AN AGREEMENT ON THE REPAYMENT OF BANK DEBTS. END SUMMARY.

2. VISIT OF SECRETARY VANCE. SECY OF STATE VANCE PAID A FOUR-HOUR VISIT TO BEIRUT ON FEB 18. HE MET WITH PRES SARKIS, PRIM MIN AL-HOSS AND OTHER LEB LEADERS BEFORE LEAVING FOR AMMAN.

3. VISIT OF FRENCH FONMIN. A. FRENCH FONMIN LOUIS DE GUIRINGAUD VISITED BEIRUT ON FEB 17 AND 18. HE TOLD REPORTERS THAT HE HAD VISITED LEB FIRST ON HIS MID-EAST TOUR TO "DEMONSTRATE FRANCE'S ATTACHMENT TO LEBANON'S UNITY, SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, AND TO OFFER "FRANCE'S SUPPORT" FOR PRES SARKIS AND HIS GOVT IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF LEB. GUIRINGAUD SAID THAT SARKIS HAD ACCEPTED AN INVITATION TO VISIT PARIS "AS SOON AS POSSIBLE."
B. GUIRINGAUD REMARKED THAT THERE WAS "NO CORRELATION AND CERTAINLY NO COMPETITION" BETWEEN HIS VISIT AND SECY VANCE'S. LOCAL NEWSPAPERS REPORTED THAT THE FRENCH FONMIN'S TALKS HAD FOCUSED ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE AND FRENCH AID.
C. GUIRINGAUD INDICATED THAT HIS COUNTRY'S ASSISTANCE WOULD BE MOSTLY IN THE FORM OF TECHNICAL ADVICE. HE DECLINED TO SET A PRECISE FIGURE, HOWEVER, AND ADMITTED THAT THE FRENCH BUDGET DID "NOT ALLOW A GREAT DEAL OF LARGESSE." HE SAID THAT WHILE FRANCE ALWAYS REFRAINED FROM INTERFERENCE IN LEB AFFAIRS, SHE WAS PREPARED TO FURNISH MIL ADVISORS WHO HAD "NO COMMITMENTS TO THE FRENCH GOVT."
D. GUIRINGAUD ALSO VISITED MARONITE PATRIARCH KHURAYSH AT BKERKE. GUIRINGAUD PUBLICLY PRAISED FRANCE'S "VERY ANCIENT TIES" WITH THE MARONITE CHRUUCH AND THE PATRIARCH FOR HIS "COURAGEOUS POSITION IN FAVOR OF LEB UNITY."

4. VISIT OF SOVIET DIPLOMAT. SOV MIDDLE EAST EXPERTT MIKHAIL SYTENKO
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ARRIVED IN BEIRUT ON FEB 18. LEB OFFICIALS HAVE PRIVATELY EXPRESSED DISPLEASURE THAT SYTENKO CAME TWO DAYS EARLIER THAN ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED, APPARENTLY TO ARRIVE ON THE SAME DAY AS SECY OF STATE VANCE.

5. SABRA AREA CALM. THE SITUATION AROUND THE SABRA AND CHATILA REFUGEE CAMPS IN WEST BEIRUT REMAINS RELATIVELY CALM (THERE HAS BEEN NO SHOOTING SINCE FEB 11.) THE PRESS, HOWEVER, CONTINUES TO SPECULATE THAT SYRIAN ASF FORCES WILL ATTEMPT TO MOVE INTO THE CAMPS NEXT WEEK AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF SEC OF STATE VANCE AND FONMIN GUIRINGAUD.

6. CHRISTIANS TAKE NEUTRAL TOWN. ACCORDING TO A RELIABLE LEB MIL SOURCE, CHRISTIAN FORCES FROM QULAYLAH TOOK OVER THE PREVIOUSLY NEUTRAL TOWN OF KHIAM ON FEB 17. THE CHRISTIANS WERE APPARENTLY RESPONDING TO PALESTINIANS WHO HAD INFILTRATED THE TOWN THE DAY BEFORE AND MURDERED MEMBERS OF A CHRISTIAN FAMILY. IN ADDITION, ACCORDING TO THE SAME SOURCE, CHRISTIAN FORCES IN ALMA AS SHAAB PLAN TO SEIZE THE VILLAGE OF NAKOURA. (DATT HAS LEARNED THAT THE CHRISTIANS IN ALMA

AS SHAAR HAVE GIVEN THE MUKTAR IN KAKOURA WRITTEN
NOTICE OF THE PLANNED ATTACK.)

7. HEAVY FIGHTING IN SOUTHERN TOWN.

CHRISTIAN FORCES FROM QULAYAH AND MARJAYUN ENGAGED PALESTINIAN
AND LEFTIST MUSLIMS NEAR BLAT (ABOUT FIVE MILES NORTH OF MARJAYUN)
ON FEB 17, ACCORDING TO LEB MIL SOURCES. THERE WAS HEAVY FIGHTING,
INCLUDING ARTILLERY FIRE AND SOME GROUND ATTACKS, THE SAME SOURCES
REPORTED.

8. PALESTINIANS CONTROL TYRE. THE MAYOR OF TYRE, ABDUL RAHMAN
AL-KHALIL, TOLD AN EMBASSY EMPLOYEE ON FEB 17 THAT THE COMMUNISTS AND
THE POPULAR DEMOCRATIC FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE
CONTROLLED TYRE. HE SAID THAT SOME ISF MEMBERS WERE IN THE CITY,
BUT UNABLE TO EXERCISE THEIR AUTHORITY.

9. QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE MEETS. AFTER HOLDING ITS "LAST MEETING"
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ON FEB 12, THE QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE HELD AN "EMERGENCY SESSION"
ON FEB 16 AND "RATIFIED" ITS REPORT ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE CAIRO
ACCORDS, ACCORDING TO AN NAHAR. AFTER THE MEETING, THE COMMITTEE
MEMBERS VISITED MARONITE PATRIARCH KHURAYSH AT BKERKE. THE SYRIAN
REPRESENTATIVE, COL MOHAMMED KHOLI, TOLD REPORTERS THAT KHURAYSH
HAD BEEN INVITED TO VISIT DAMASCUS.

10. AGREEMENT ON DEBTS. PRES SARKIS ON FEB 16 WORKED OUT AN AGREE-
MENT BETWEEN BANKING AND BUSINESS INTERESTS FOR THE REPAYMENT OF
DEBTS, ACCORDING TO AN NAHAR. (MANY BUSINESSMEN HAVE DELAYED REPAY-
ING THEIR DEBTS, BECAUSE OF THE DISRUPTION CAUSED BY THE FIGHTING IN
1975 AND 1976.) UNDER THE AGREEMENT, THE CENTRAL BANK WILL PROVIDE
LOANS TO COMMERCIAL BANKS SO THAT THEY MAY IN TURN OFFER FAVORABLE
REPAYMENT TERMS.
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